

## Town Land May Be Open to Deer Hunting

By CLAIRE MASSIMO

The balance between man and nature is growing decidedly unbalanced in Duxbury, first with coyotes and now with deer.

Both the conservation commission and selectmen have been hearing complaints about deer overpopulation, including resident complaints that deer are foraging in their gardens.

Conservation commission chairman Friend Weiler appeared before selectman last night to inform them that he is looking into the possibility of allowing limited deer hunting on some of the town's conservation land.

"I'm aware there will be a knee-jerk reaction against hunting on conservation land. I had it myself, but then I looked at the situation and realized something has to be done," Weiler said.

Weiler has consulted with William Wotek, the state's deer and moose specialist, and provided selectmen with an overview of the deer situation in town.

"Basically, a town the size of Duxbury with 10 square miles of woodland, could support a deer herd of 80. Our best evidence is that there is 150 deer in town, and that number is growing," Weiler said.

Weiler said that deer have no natural predators, and that since hunting is not allowed on conservation land, there is currently very little thinning of the deer population.

"Statistics do show that approximately 20-30 deer are killed by cars in Duxbury each year, including on Route 3. But coyotes don't take down deer, and I don't think we want to introduce black bears to Duxbury," Weiler said.

Besides posing a traffic threat, deer are potential hosts for ticks carrying Lyme disease, said commission member Thomas Gill. According to the town's health agent, nine cases of Lyme disease have been reported in town since late 2000.

Coyotes have been an increasing problem in town over the summer, according to police and animal control reports. Selectman Andre Martechinni asked Weiler to look into the possibility of coyote hunting as well.

"Coyotes are a scarier issue than deer. Family pets, and possibly small children are at risk, and the coyotes have been howling all over," Martechinni said.

Weiler has scheduled a meeting at town hall for Sept. 24, from 7:30 to 9 pm in the mural room at town hall. He invited selectmen and the public to come hear Wotek's presentation on the dramatic growth rates of deer herds.

Weiler plans to do a lot of research between now and that meeting, including surveying other towns regarding their hunting policies, he said.

There remain many ques-

continued on page 6

Duxbury Clipper

continued from page one

tions to be answered. Weiler said, including what land to allow hunting on, what type of deer can be hunted (doe, buck or fawn), what weapons can be used, and should tree stand be required.

"We're looking at bow hunting right now. It's a less dangerous weapon. We are looking to thin the deer population as opposed to eradicating it," Weiler said. If it were decided to allow hunting on conservation land, the rule would not apply to all conservation land in town, Weiler said.

"We'll identify some large contiguous piece of land that isn't near houses. Hopefully that is where the deer are," Weiler said.

Weiler is also considering



**FRIEND OR FOE? – Conservation Commission Chairman Friend Weiler talks to selectmen about the possibility of allowing deer hunting on town conservation land. A public meeting on the issue is scheduled for Sept. 24.**

requiring that hunting be done from tree stands, forcing hunters to shoot from above and making it more likely errant arrows would go right into the ground.

Deer hunting season is in October, and Weiler is open to instituting some form of deer hunting on conservation land this season, if the town can come to a consensus.

"I'm open to it this year. The herd is growing as we want."

Selectman Betsy Sullivan urged Weiler to formulate and publicize any final policy as quickly as possible.

"The earlier the better, so we can let people know it's coming" Sullivan said.

There is some precedent for hunting on conservation land. Duck hunting is currently allowed on some conservation land, in the marshes near the ocean, Weiler said.